

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Montpelier, Vermont**

TEAM: Independent and Federal Programs

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education renew Springfield College's Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority to offer Bachelor of Science in Human Services and Master of Science in Human Services for a period of three (3) years ending December 31, 2011 on condition that the college satisfies the conditions, terms and limitations contained in the attached reports?

RECOMMENDATION: That the State Board of Education renew Springfield College's Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority to offer Bachelor of Science in Human Services and Master of Science in Human Services for a period of three (3) years ending December 31, 2011 on condition that the college addresses issues raised in the report prepared by the Vermont Higher Education Council ("VHEC") and satisfies the conditions, terms and limitations contained in the attached report prepared by the Department of Education ("VT DOE"). The VHEC report and the VT DOE report are attached hereto.

STATUTORY 16 VSA § 176a
AUTHORITY:

BACKGROUND: The State Board is responsible for issuing Certificates of Approval and Certificates of Degree Granting Authority to an applicant whose resources are found to be adequate and appropriate for the protection of students and the public interest. The State Board issued Certificates of Degree-Granting Authority to Springfield College in 1993, 1998, 2002 and February 2005 to offer baccalaureate and master degrees in human services.

VHEC, the Vermont Higher Education Council recommends renewal of Springfield College's Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority for the baccalaureate and master's programs for a period of 3 years. VHEC's report is attached. Departmental staff separately recommends several conditions.

COST IMPLICATIONS:

\$1,021 for staff to monitor compliance with conditions of approval and potential changes during the certification period

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Kerry Garber, Director Independent and Federal Programs
Laura Glass, Postsecondary Approval Coordinator

**Conditions, Terms and Limitations of Approval
Springfield College
December 16, 2008**

The Vermont Higher Education Council's Committee on Accreditation and Certification has recommended approval of the bachelor and master's degree programs offered by Springfield College.

The following statutory and regulatory conditions, terms and limitations are included in letters of approval issued by the Director of Independent and Federal Programs as part of renewal of Certificates of Degree-Granting Authority by the State Board.

Conditions and Terms of Approval:

1. Springfield College shall notify each applicant for enrollment, in writing, on an application, enrollment or registration form to be signed by the applicant, that credits earned through the respective programs are transferable only at the discretion of the receiving school.
2. Springfield College shall notify the State Board prior to making any substantive changes in or additions to educational programs described in your current certification application including engaging in any contractual arrangements with external organizations to teach credit-bearing courses.
3. At such time that Springfield College proposes to discontinue regular programs of instruction in Vermont, the school shall promptly notify the State Board regarding the disposition of student academic records.
4. Should Springfield College decide to offer new degree or certificate programs during this approval period, a new Certificate of Approval or Degree-Granting Authority application will be necessary.
5. By no later than July 31, 2009, Springfield College shall hire a full-time undergraduate instructor at the St. Johnsbury campus, who shall be qualified and able to fill the void created by the two recently-retired full-time faculty. Within 30 days of the date of this report and within 30 days of each trimester thereafter until such time as the Vermont Department of Education notifies Springfield College that personnel resources are adequate and appropriate, Springfield College shall notify the Vermont Department of Education of its efforts to recruit and hire a full-time undergraduate instructor at the St. Johnsbury campus. Within 30 days of hiring a full-time undergraduate instructor at the St. Johnsbury campus, Springfield College shall provide to the Vermont Department of Education the following: credentials of the full-time instructor; date when instructor shall commence employment at Springfield College; and class schedule for the instructor.
6. Within 30 days of the date of this report and within 30 days following the start of each trimester thereafter for so long as this approval is valid, Springfield College shall notify the Vermont Department of Education of the number of matriculants enrolled in all degree programs for each enrollment period.
7. As soon as possible but in no event later than July 31, 2009, Springfield College shall provide to the Vermont Department of Education all updated inspection notices from the Vermont Fire Safety Division.
8. Failure of Springfield College to meet any of the terms or conditions of approval may result in the initiation of regulatory suspension procedures associated with the Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority.

**Report to the Vermont State Board of Education
Prepared by Independent and Federal Programs (“IFP”) Team
With Respect to Springfield College
Dated: September 30, 2008**

Overview

Portions of this report are drawn from the applicant’s course catalog, application, correspondence and other information provided to this agency.

The School of Human Services (“SHS”) is one of five schools within Springfield College. SHS has operated in St. Johnsbury, Vermont since 1993.

Springfield College registered with the Vermont Secretary of State in 1993. Springfield College is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Springfield College has applied to renew its Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority to offer Baccalaureate and Master’s degrees in Human Services.

SHS offers a Bachelor of Science in Human Services (“BSHS”), with concentrations in Addiction Studies, Community Youth Development and Leadership, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood, and Education; however, not all concentrations are offered at the St. Johnsbury campus. Masters students may elect a 36 credit Community Counseling Psychology (“MCCP”) concentration, a 36 hour Organizational Management and Leadership (“MOML”) concentration, or a 60 credit Mental Health Counseling (“MMHC”) concentration. Although all campuses of Springfield College offer programs leading to a Bachelor of Science with a major in Human Services and a Master of Science with a major in Human Service, campuses may have different course schedules and registration deadlines, and may offer different concentrations.

Admission requirements for the baccalaureate degree include: demonstrating a commitment to human services; having a high school diploma (or equivalent); transferring in up to 72 credits from an accredited college or achieving these credits through SHS’s prior learning process. BSHS courses at Springfield College are advanced (not general education) courses.

Admissions requirements for the master’s degree include: having an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited college; having five years of employment in human services; and showing the ability to succeed academically.

SHS programs are adult-oriented, offering weekend classes to allow students to attend college while continuing workplace, family and community commitments. The SHS curriculum focuses on leadership development and involves students in collaborative learning.

Springfield College currently offers SHS programs in CA, DE, FL, MA, NH, SC, TX and WI in addition to VT.

Springfield College has a posthumous degree policy, whereby Springfield College will award a degree (any level) posthumously provided certain conditions are met.

Because Springfield College proposes to offer degrees in Vermont, Springfield College must obtain, prior to conferring or offering to confer a degree, a Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority, as

required under Vermont's postsecondary statute, 16 VSA § 176a (c) (3). Springfield College must demonstrate that it has adequate and appropriate resources and meets State Board Certificate of Approval criteria.

As part of its application to offer degrees in Vermont, Springfield College's Chief Administrative Officer signed a statement of assurance that the application is accurate and that the school is committed to offering the offering the full program for students to complete in a reasonable length of time.

Criteria for Issuance of a Certificate of Approval

16 VSA § 167

(e) On proper application, the state board shall issue a certificate of approval or a certificate of degree-granting authority, or both, to an applicant whose goals, objectives, programs and resources, including personnel, curriculum, finances and facilities are found by the state board to be adequate and appropriate for the stated purpose and for the protection of students and the public interest.... The certificate shall be for a term not exceeding five years. The certificate may be subject to conditions, terms or limitations.

Vermont Rule 2243.5.1 – Resources Required to Meet Stated Purposes

The school shall submit a clear and specific statement of purpose regarding the education which it intends to provide and shall demonstrate that it has the resources, including personnel, curriculum, finances, and facilities necessary to accomplish its stated purposes. All activities conducted by the school shall be consistent with its stated purpose.

SHS's mission is to educate students in spirit, mind and body for leadership in service to humanity. SHS has strong connections with the YMCA and other non-profit service organizations.

Administrative Personnel:

The Assistant Dean of the School of Human Services / Campus Director serves as the chief academic and administrative officer for the St. Johnsbury campus. Since 2000, the Manchester, NH and St. Johnsbury campuses of Springfield College have shared the Assistant Dean / Campus Director. In addition, the St. Johnsbury campus has the following administrative personnel: Assistant Director for Administration; Assistant Director for Admissions and Recruitment; and Prior Learning Coordinator.

Instructional Personnel:

The undergraduate catalog reports that: (i) SHS employs full-time faculty who are responsible for teaching, service and scholarship and part-time faculty who are directly involved in agency and community work; and (ii) such faculty have the expertise, resources and flexibility needed to address new developments in human services practice and delivery.

During the on-site visit, the Review Team learned that two full-time faculty recently retired from Springfield College's SHS St. Johnsbury campus, leaving the undergraduate program at St. Johnsbury campus with no dedicated full-time faculty. Springfield College shared its business plan to hire a full-time instructor for the undergraduate program to commence at St. Johnsbury campus in or around Fall 2009.

With the absence of at least one full-time undergraduate faculty, Springfield College has failed to demonstrate that SHS has the adequate personnel resources to accomplish its stated purpose. Accordingly, the IFP Review Team finds that the personnel resources are not adequate and appropriate to meet the program's stated purpose and for the protection of students and the public interest, as required by 16 VSA § 176a (e) (1) and 16 VSA § 176 (e).

Curriculum:

At its St. Johnsbury campus, Springfield College offers the following degrees: Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services ("BSHS") and Master of Science in Human Services ("MSHS").

SHS operates a trimester program with September, January and May terms. Undergraduate classes meet for 4 months each term on weekends and/or evenings. Each undergraduate course meets once a month for a full day. Students are required to complete pre-assignments before a course commences.

Springfield College intends undergraduate students to complete the baccalaureate program in 16 to 24 months of full-time enrollment. Applicants to the BSHS program are expected to either transfer in no fewer than 30, and no more than 72, general education credits from other accredited colleges or achieve these credits through the SHS's prior learning process. All BSHS students are required to complete 120 credit hours to graduate with a minimum of 48 credits to be earned in residency at Springfield College.

SHS graduate students pursuing the Organizational Management and Leadership Concentration ("MOML") or the Community Counseling Psychology Concentration ("MCCP") are required to complete 36 credit hours to graduate, with no more than 6 transferred credit hours. SHS graduate students pursuing the Mental Health Counseling Concentration ("MMHC") are required to attend full-time and to complete 60 semester hours over a period of 24 months in order to graduate, with no more than 9 transferred semester credits.

For those concentrations offered at the St. Johnsbury campus, all advanced courses needed to complete the undergraduate degree program and all courses needed to complete the graduate degree program can be earned at the campus.

SHS students and faculty have access to an online system, the Manhattan Virtual Classroom, which allows students to retrieve course assignments, submit completed assignments to their instructors, participate in class discussions, link to Internet resources, and send and receive email. Faculty use the Manhattan Virtual Classroom to post assignments, course syllabi, articles, class notes and assignments, as well as to retrieve student work and provide online feedback.

The IFP Review Team finds that the curricula proposed by Springfield College are adequate and appropriate to meet the program's stated purpose.

Finances:

Vermont Rule 2243.5.2 – Stability

(a) Sources of Income. The school shall have a plan for financing each proposed degree level or program. The plan shall specify the dollar amounts and proportions of income by source, including but not limited to: (1) tuition and fees, (2) other school generated funds, (3) federal or state funds, and (4) private funds.

The IFP Review Team reviewed audited consolidated financial statements for Springfield College as well as St. Johnsbury campus-specific financial information. The IFP Review Team notes that enrollment at the St. Johnsbury campus has declined over the past two years, and SHS is developing and implementing strategies for increasing enrollment at the campus.

The IFP Review Team finds that the sources of income for Springfield College are adequate and appropriate to meet the program's stated purpose.

(b) Financial Capability. The school shall demonstrate in its financial plan that it will have sufficient funds to maintain operation and shall clearly document its ability to fulfill contractual obligations to students.

Each campus, including the St. Johnsbury campus, has its own budget. The St. Johnsbury campus budget is submitted to the Dean of SHS for review and inclusion in the SHS budget, which in turn is submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for review and inclusion in the Academic Affairs budget. The final budget is reviewed by the President and the President's senior staff; however, campus finances are managed at the Springfield College level. Springfield College has sufficient assets to fulfill contractual obligations to students and has committed itself to do so.

The IFP Review Team finds that the financial capability of Springfield College is adequate and appropriate to meet the program's stated purpose.

(c) Management. The school operates under a governing structure which clearly delineates responsibility for all legal aspects of operations. The school shall demonstrate sound business and financial management by showing evidence of an internal organization for the administration of its financial resources and a school budget planning process. In addition, the school shall maintain adequate financial records audited annually by an independent certified public accountant.

The Assistant Dean / Campus Directors responsible for the eleven campuses report to the Dean of the SHS who in turn reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

In July 2000, SHS initiated a regional approach to the management of the St. Johnsbury, VT and Manchester, NH, and these two campuses share the Assistant Dean / Campus Director, who is responsible for both campuses.

Administrative staff at the St. Johnsbury campus includes an Assistant Director for recruitment & admissions, an Assist Director for Administration and a Prior Learning Coordinator.

SHS provided for review audited consolidated financial statements for the years ending June 30, 2006. SHS provided unaudited income statements for the St. Johnsbury campus for the years ending June 30, 2006, June 30, 2007 and June 30, 2008.

The IFP Review Team finds that the financial management of Springfield College is adequate and appropriate to meet the program's stated purpose.

Vermont Rule 2243.5.3 – Disclosure

Information provided by the school to prospective students either directly or through advertisements shall not be false or misleading. The school shall be able to substantiate any claims regarding such matters as the likelihood of employment, graduate school admission or transfer of credit....

Springfield College's SHS publishes a 66-page Undergraduate Catalog 2008-2009 and a 48-page Graduate Catalog 2008-2009. These two catalogs cover all items required by Vermont State Board rules.

The IFP Review Team finds that information disclosed in the Undergraduate Catalog 2008-2009 and the Graduate Catalog 2008-2009 is neither false nor misleading.

Vermont Rule 2243.5.4 – Facilities

The school's facilities shall meet all applicable state, federal and local fire, safety, health and access standards.

The St. Johnsbury campus is located just off Route 2 near I-91. The first floor contains three classrooms, a lounge, kitchen and dining area. The second floor contains administrative offices, a mental health counseling suite, a counseling practice room and a seminar room equipped with an interactive TV unit linked to other SHS campuses.

Springfield College has provided inspection reports from appropriate state and local agencies for the St. Johnsbury campus facilities; however, the Fire Prevention Inspection Results Report is dated January 20, 1998 and the St. Johnsbury Fire Department walk-through safety inspection letter dated July 11, 2008 listed some items requiring attention. Springfield College has represented that it will request an updated Certificate of Occupancy for Educational Facility.

Springfield College has demonstrated that SHS facilities at the St. Johnsbury campus are adequate and appropriate for projected enrollments; however, Springfield College has failed to demonstrate that the St. Johnsbury campus facilities meet required applicable state, federal and local fire, safety, health and access standards. Accordingly, the IFP Review Team finds that the SHS facilities at the St. Johnsbury campus are not adequate and appropriate for the protection of students and the public interest, as required by 16 VSA § 176a (e) (1) and 16 VSA § 176 (e).

Vermont Rule 2243.5.5 – Student Records

The school shall have adequate procedures for safe keeping of student records and complying with requirements of 16 VSA § 175.

Student records are maintained in the second floor administrative offices at the St. Johnsbury campus.

At the completion of each trimester student academic records are transmitted to Springfield College's registrar in Springfield, MA. Electronic files of student academic records are backed up routinely and archival back-up tapes are kept off-site.

The IFP Review Team finds that procedures for safekeeping student records at Springfield College and transferring those records for permanent safekeeping in Springfield, MA are adequate and appropriate.

Team Recommendations

Having conducted a review of Springfield College's St. Johnsbury campus and Springfield College's application for a renewal Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority under the requirements of Title 16, V.S.A., Section 176a, the IFP Review Team recommends that the Vermont State Board of

Education issue Springfield College a Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority for a period of three (3) years ending December 31, 2011 subject to the following conditions, terms and limitations:

1. Springfield College shall notify each applicant for enrollment, in writing, on an application, enrollment or registration form to be signed by the applicant, that credits earned through the respective programs are transferable only at the discretion of the receiving school.
2. Springfield College shall notify the State Board prior to making any substantive changes in or additions to educational programs described in your current certification application including engaging in any contractual arrangements with external organizations to teach credit-bearing courses.
3. At such time that Springfield College proposes to discontinue regular programs of instruction in Vermont, the school shall promptly notify the State Board regarding the disposition of student academic records.
4. Should Springfield College decide to offer new degree or certificate programs during this approval period, a new Certificate of Approval or Degree-Granting Authority application will be necessary.
5. By no later than July 31, 2009, Springfield College shall hire a full-time undergraduate instructor at the St. Johnsbury campus, who shall be qualified and able to fill the void created by the two recently-retired full-time faculty. Within 30 days of the date of this report and within 30 days of each trimester thereafter until such time as the Vermont Department of Education notifies Springfield College that personnel resources are adequate and appropriate, Springfield College shall notify the Vermont Department of Education of its efforts to recruit and hire a full-time undergraduate instructor at the St. Johnsbury campus. Within 30 days of hiring a full-time undergraduate instructor at the St. Johnsbury campus, Springfield College shall provide to the Vermont Department of Education the following: credentials of the full-time instructor; date when instructor shall commence employment at Springfield College; and class schedule for the instructor.
6. Within 30 days of the date of this report and within 30 days following the start of each trimester thereafter for so long as this approval is valid, Springfield College shall notify the Vermont Department of Education of the number of matriculants enrolled in all degree programs for each enrollment period.
7. As soon as possible but in no event later than July 31, 2009, Springfield College shall provide to the Vermont Department of Education all updated inspection notices from the Vermont Fire Safety Division.
8. Failure of Springfield College to meet any of the terms or conditions of approval may result in the initiation of regulatory suspension procedures associated with the Certificate of Degree-Granting Authority.